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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL VISITS TO ATLANTIC CANADA STRESS SECURITY AND TRADE

1. SUMMARY: Ambassador Wilkins made two successful trips in rapid succession to Atlantic Canada as part of his orientation to the country. His visits to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia focused on priority issues of security, border infrastructure and trade.
END SUMMARY.

New Brunswick

2. The Ambassador made a short but productive visit to New Brunswick and Maine July 29 - 30. Premier Bernard Lord hosted a lunch for the Ambassador, the Consul General and Lord's Chief of Staff. While primarily an opportunity for the Ambassador to get to know the Premier, a number of issues of substance were discussed. In particular, Lord stressed the market-based nature of the Atlantic softwood lumber industry and the desire of Atlantic producers to be recognized as not receiving government subsidies. Among other issues we raised the case of a U.S. firm that had been having difficulty receiving information on a provincial telemedicine project. (Note: Within days of the lunch the firm was contacted by the NB government to discuss the project. End note.)

3. At the Calais, ME - St. Stephen, NB, border crossing the Ambassador received briefings from CBP Port Director David Lumbert and Maine's Commissioner of Transportation David Cole about the state of the crossing and plans to improve it with a new bridge and inspection area. Calais - St. Stephen is the 8th busiest border crossing and one of the main truck routes between Atlantic Canada and the U.S. A significant part of the cargo crossing the border -- which consists on the U.S. side of a two-lane bridge, a small inspection area and a 70-year old office building -- is highly perishable fresh seafood. Lumbert demonstrated the operation of the port's VACIS machine which scans all truck traffic coming into the U.S.

4. The Ambassador then met with press from the area and sat down with members of a local binational citizens' group that has been promoting the new infrastructure. Federal Member of Parliament Greg Thompson also attended. Much of the discussion related to the cooperative efforts of local citizens to encourage state, provincial and federal governments to support a new bridge. Thompson and several others also raised the proposed construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on Passamaquoddy Bay in Maine. Thompson is on record as opposing the project, which would be supplied by tankers that would need to pass through Canadian waters to get to the plant.

5. From Calais the Ambassador headed to Campobello Island, NB, home of Roosevelt Campobello International Park, a unique U.S.-Canada joint venture that is funded equally by the two governments but administered by an independent board. The Ambassador had the opportunity to meet the Park's Commissioners as well as a number of other prominent individuals, including Arthur Irving, CEO of Irving Oil and Chancellor of Acadia University in Nova Scotia. The Ambassador spoke to the Commissioners to kick off their meeting the morning of July 30, and then returned to Fredericton by way of St. John, the province's largest city and one of its main economic centers.

6. RCMP "J" Division members provided excellent security coverage for the visit and arranged for helicopter transportation to Calais, Campobello and back to Fredericton. The helicopter saved several hours on the road and gave the Ambassador the opportunity to see a number of important parts of the New Brunswick economy -- miles and miles of forest, the port, Irving oil refinery and pulp mill in St. John and the Point Lepreau nuclear power plant -- that would otherwise have had to wait for a future trip.

Nova Scotia

7. The Ambassador, accompanied by Christy Cox of the Embassy and CG, toured the Halifax International Airport's preclearance facility construction zone on arrival at the airport August 8. New CEO Eleanor Humphries briefed him on HIA and its current expansion plans. Construction of the preclearance area is progressing rapidly as the airport works to be ready for a late 2006 start-up. The construction manager reports good cooperation with CBP in Washington, but did note that the airport was seeking more specificity on several CBP requirements, including radiation detection and passenger data, that might be outside of the airport's authority to provide.

18. From the airport the Ambassador, Ms. Cox and CG headed northwest to the Fox Harb'r resort on the Northumberland Strait, site of the fifth annual networking gathering organized by Frank McKenna. McKenna started the event when he was with the Atlantic Canadian law firm MacInnes Cooper and it now attracts a who's who of business and academic figures from the region and other parts of Canada. At dinner the Ambassador and Ambassador McKenna delivered well-received keynote speeches on bilateral issues. Overall, the event was an excellent introduction to a large and influential group of Canadians.

19. In addition to their speeches, the Ambassador and Frank McKenna participated in a conference call about Devil's Lake with reporters from across the country. The Ambassador also had a private meeting with Nova Scotia Premier John Hamm. Hamm expressed pleasure at the resumption of beef trade with the U.S. and added his voice to that of the other Atlantic Premiers regarding softwood lumber trade.

110. Returning to Halifax, the Ambassador had breakfast with senior management of the Halifax Port Authority. Port security -- for both cargo and cruise ship passengers -- and expanding trade were key themes as the HPA executive team briefed the Ambassador on current developments at the port and then took him on a short boat tour to see operations from the water. A brief session organized by provincial economic development agency Nova Scotia Business Inc introduced the Ambassador to a number of key corporate executives including AMCIT Ralph Tedesco, CEO of Emera, owner of both Nova Scotia Power and Bangor Hydroelectric in Maine.

111. The Ambassador formally presented to Halifax Mayor Peter Kelly and Councilor Linda Mosher a U.S. flag flown over the USS CONSTITUTION as a thank you to the citizens of Halifax who helped preserve from development a burial site where nearly 200 American POWs from the War of 1812 are interred.

112. The Ambassador returned to the themes of security and trade at his luncheon speech to the AMCHAM Atlantic Chapter. The newly-formed chapter has now hosted events featuring two Ambassadors and is getting a solid footing in the region. New chairman Barry Horne laid out an ambitions plan to recruit members and hold meetings in all four Atlantic provinces.

113. Following his speech the Ambassador came to the Consulate, toured our offices and met with the staff. He elaborated on his priorities for Mission Canada -- including seeking additional resources -- and took questions. The final event on his schedule was an interview at ATV News, the most widely watched news show in the three Maritime Provinces. Interviewer Steve Murphy didn't pull any punches and the Ambassador stayed "on-message," stressing the need to look forward, not backward, in the bilateral relationship.

114. COMMENT: All in all two successful trips to Atlantic Canada. The Ambassador has had the opportunity to meet quite a few people in the region and to get the USG's message out on a number of occasions. Future themes for his visits will include military and law enforcement cooperation, joint efforts on the environment, offshore energy supplies and resident AMCITS. END COMMENT.

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